

Stop, Listen, & Learn to Follow God

Life has a way of throwing obstacles in our path, and sometimes those obstacles are actually God's way of getting our attention. When things aren't flowing smoothly, when people keep asking us the same questions, or when we feel that uncomfortable feeling in our spirit, it might be time to stop and listen.

Why Does God Allow Difficulties in Our Lives?

God doesn't cause the bad things that happen to us - that comes from the enemy. But God is faithful to work good even in the midst of difficult circumstances. Sometimes He allows obstacles to prevent us from going down a path that would ultimately harm us.

Think about the story of Balaam in the Old Testament. This sorcerer was determined to do something God had clearly told him *not* to do—but he was blinded by greed. Then an angel — more than likely a fallen angel, an evil spirit — appeared with a drawn sword to block his path. Balaam couldn't see it, but his donkey could. The donkey kept stopping, turning aside, and pressing against the wall, trying to protect his master from danger. That “misbehaving” donkey—like a vehicle breaking down today—was actually being used by God to *save Balaam's life!*

When Things Don't Flow, Slow Down

When life becomes difficult and nothing seems to be working right or working out, don't just push through with a bullheaded attitude. Sometimes God places obstacles in our way to protect us from rushing into something that could end badly. These difficulties might be His mercy, preventing us from sowing the wrong seeds or making decisions we'll regret.

Are We All God's Children?

This is a common misconception that needs to be addressed. Not everyone is automatically a child of God. We are all God's creation, but not everyone has His nature within them. Jesus himself told some of the most religious people of His day, "You are of your father, the devil."

The Need to Be Born Again

To become a true child of God, you must be born again - born of the Spirit. This means receiving God's nature into your spirit. When this happens, your desires change. Things you once wanted to do, you no longer want to do. Things you once avoided, you now desire to pursue.

When you have God's nature within you, you hate unrighteousness. If you're truly born again and you give in to sin, you'll be angry with yourself afterward because it goes against your new nature.

How Does God Try to Get Our Attention?

God uses various methods to speak to us and guide us away from wrong paths:

Through People

He often sends people to ask questions or make comments that should cause us to pause and reconsider our direction.

Through Circumstances

When multiple obstacles appear in our path, it might be God's way of saying "stop and reconsider."

Through Our Spirit

That uncomfortable feeling when something "doesn't feel right" is often the Holy Spirit's conviction.

The Danger of Being Set in Our Ways

One of the biggest obstacles to hearing God's voice is becoming rigid in our thinking. When we get locked into our opinions and routines, we can miss God's direction entirely. The prophet Jeremiah asked, "To whom shall I speak and give warning? Their ear is uncircumcised and they cannot give heed."

Don't Assume Your Plans Are God's Plans

Even good activities - like Bible study - can be wrong if they're not what God wants you to do at that moment. Being in the right place at the right time, doing what God wants you to do, is more important than doing something that merely looks spiritual.

The Importance of Asking God for Direction

Many times God is simply waiting for us to ask. The Bible says, "You have not because you ask not." When we don't ask for God's guidance, we're essentially saying we have everything figured out. But when we ask, we open ourselves to receive His direction.

Be Open to Correction

Make it easy for God to correct you. Pray, "Lord, if I'm missing it somewhere, please show me." Be willing to have your opinions challenged and your plans changed if they don't align with God's will.

Slowing Down to Hear God's Voice

In our fast-paced world, we often move too quickly to hear the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. We need to:

- Take time to listen to our hearts
- Check with God before making decisions
- Be sensitive to His conviction
- Allow others to speak in conversations instead of dominating them

Don't Love the World or Its Things

First John 2:15-16 warns us not to love the world or the things in the world. When we become dominated by worldly desires - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - we lose our sensitivity to God's voice.

Life Application

This week, make a conscious effort to slow down and check with God before making decisions, both big and small. Start each day by asking Him to guide your steps and help you recognize when He's trying to get your attention through people, circumstances, or that inner conviction.

Pay attention to those moments when something "doesn't feel right" - that might be the Holy Spirit's way of redirecting you. Don't push through obstacles without first asking God if He's trying to tell you something.

Questions for Reflection:

- When was the last time you asked God for direction before making a decision?
- Are there areas in your life where you've been pushing your own agenda instead of seeking God's will?
- How quickly do you move through your day - are you taking time to listen for God's voice?
- What obstacles or repeated conversations might God be using to get your attention right now?

Remember, it's your nature as a child of God to want to do His will. Don't make following Him more difficult than it needs to be by being stubborn or set in your ways. Stay open, stay teachable, and stay sensitive to His leading.

Quotes

1. "God is good to me all the time — all the time, God is good to me."
2. "Everyone is God's creation. God created everybody, but not everyone is considered His offspring. In other words, they don't have His nature in them."
3. "When you get God's nature on the inside of you, there are things you now *want* to do that, when you were a child of the devil, you didn't want to do. And now there are things you *don't* want to do anymore."
4. "When your nature changes, your 'want-to's' change. Your desires change. What you want to do and what you long to do — that all changes too."

5. "God so loved this sinful, rebellious world that He's tried to keep people out of as much trouble as possible by making it *difficult* for them to mess up. Isn't God good? He gets in the way!"
6. "When things aren't flowing, sometimes you've got to slow down and consider *why* they're not flowing. Don't just keep going and be bullheaded."
7. "Things may be standing in the way — making it difficult for you to do something that could lead you into trouble."
8. "I need to be in the right place, doing the right thing, at the right time — not just doing something that *looks* right, *sounds* right, or *seems* right."
9. "If it's not God's thing — if it's not God's will — then it's not a good thing. Even if it's the Bible and appears to be spiritual."
10. "Many times God will send someone across a person's path — to say something, do something, call them on the phone — something to convict them and get their attention."
11. "To whom can God talk to and give warning that they would hear and heed Him?"
12. "If you don't delight in God's Word, it's going to be hard for you to hear God's warnings — because He always speaks in line with His Word."
13. "We get set in our ways. We get locked into routines. And of course, we get in a rush — moving so fast that we can't take the time to listen to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit."
14. "Just because things are going well, just because you're getting things, doesn't mean you're right or in the right place. You can't judge being right by outward blessing."
15. "You've got to slow down. You've got to listen to your heart. You've got to be sensitive. That's what living by faith is all about."
16. "We want to be pliable, teachable, moldable, correctable, changeable — that's how you've got to be if you're going to make it."
17. "When you have the nature of God in you, it's easy to do God's will. It's only when we stiffen our necks, harden our hearts, get stuck in our routines, or rush from here to there that it becomes difficult."

Verses

1. John 14:30
2. 1 John 2:15
3. James 4:4
4. John 8:44
5. Jeremiah 6:10
6. Numbers 22
7. 1 Samuel 8
8. Luke 15:11-32
9. Haggai 1:6
10. 1 John 2:16

Summary

Life's obstacles aren't always roadblocks to overcome - sometimes they're God's way of protecting us from harmful paths. When circumstances become difficult, people ask probing questions, or we feel uncomfortable in our spirit, it may be time to pause and listen. God uses various methods to redirect us: through people, circumstances, and that inner conviction when something doesn't feel right. The key is slowing down enough to hear His voice and being willing to change direction when He's trying to get our attention.